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AUTHOR Iopata, Helena Znaniecka
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ABSTRACT

Conflict and cohesion among different generations of Polish Americans are discussed in this research review. First, demographic figures related to Polish immigration to the U.S. are presented, and the age structure of the present Polish American population is described. It is posited, based on this demographic information, that Polish American families and communities contain members who have been socialized into different subcultures, influenced by the degree of institutional completeness and the tightness of ethnic community boundaries. Drawing from social science literature on this topic the author identifies sources of strain in intergenerational relations as: (1) rapid culture change encountered by younger Polish Americans; (2) the contrast between the pre-immigration traditional agrarian lifestyle of many older generation Poles and the more urbanized American culture into which the youth are socialized; (3) contrasting ideologies in the areas of social, economic, and educational mobility; (4) differing attitudes toward social change; and (5) the dissolution of ethnic neighborhoods and family ties. Sources of cohesion are described as (1) Polish Catholic schools and the Church; (2) the traditional intrafamilial ethos that minimizes conflict among family members; (3) the existence of many voluntary associations; (4) the Polish American press; and (5) the tendency of sons to pursue the occupation of their fathers. (GC)

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INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS IN POLONIA

Helena Znaniecka Lopata
Loyola University of Chicago

Two major difficulties face the researcher attempting to study intergenerational relations in American Polonia: a lack of sufficient objective data and the heterogeneity of the population. The sources of available information include the United States Census, restricted in usefulness by the American hesitation over asking for ethnic and religious identity, and studies of individual communities which are apt to have limited information on intergenerational relations (see Sanders and Morawska, 1975). The heterogeneity arises out of differences among the emigrants from Poland, in "old" and "new" emigration waves, the manner of settlement and the life style developed here, with generational, age and sex variations (Babinski, 1978; Galush, 1975; Morawska, 1978). Relations among the generations of Polish Americans in Los Angeles are apt to be quite different from those of Polonians in Buffalo (Obidinski, 1968, 1976; Sandberg, 1964).

The concept of intergenerational relations can refer to either of two sets of relations: those among different generations of immigrants and their descendents in an ethnic community or the society at large, and those among different generations within a family. This discussion refers to both. In the case of Polish Americans the first generation is the one which migrated to the United States directly from Poland as a national culture society even when occupied by three foreign political states or after temporary residence elsewhere (Znaniecki, 1952). Aside from the new emigration, composed of people displaced by World War II and anti-Polish policies of the Soviets and

Nazis, which peaked in 1950, the "great influx' of Polish immigrants to America took place between 1880 and the 1920s. Most immigrants came in the early years of their lives, between ages 20 and 40 in both emigration waves (Lopata, 1976a, 1976b; Pinkowski, 1978; Polzin. 1973). In order to best visualize intergenerational relations in Polonia we can plot the approximate ages of each generation by the decade in which the immigrants entered at age 20+, adding 25 years per generation. By this hypothetical system, immigrants entering America in the 1920s would have been at that time between 20 and 29 years, by 1980 they would be between 80 and 89 years old. Their children would be in their late 50s or early 60s and grandchildren in their 30s. The table below contains the age distributions for decades of the major migrations.

If entered America in:	Age by Year of Immigration and Generation Age and Generation (25 years between)			
	Immigrant	2nd	3rd	4th
1880	120	95	70	45
1890	110	85	60	35
1900	100	75	50	25
1910	90	65	40	1.
1920	80	55	30	5
1930	70	45	20	--
1950	50	25	--	--

The figures above make it obvious that few people entering America in their 20s in 1920 would still be alive. However, some of those entering before or immediately after World War I as small children could have survived till 1980, although they would now be quite old. The gap in the immigration flow between the late 1920s till after World War II will have produced a relative absence of that age cohort. On the other hand, the 1920s

brought to America some older siblings and parents of people already settled here. The new emigration contained few older people since most had served in the armed services or labor camps during the war. The cold war prevented these people from bringing their parents from Poland to America.

Census figures of the population of the United States are usually limited to place of birth of the respondent, the mother and the father. However, a special "supplement to the November 1969 Current Population Survey" asked for country of origin and a special report contains data of importance to our analysis of intergenerational relations (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1969). The "Polish origin" population was listed as just over four million persons, forming 2.0 percent of the American population. The median age was one of the oldest, 39.8 years, with the highest median of 45.8 attained by the Russians. The Polish men were younger than the women (38.7 to 40.9 respectively), a fact reflecting the death rate differences between the sexes (Table 1 of the report). Seventeen percent of the people claiming Polish origin were under age 14 and 31 percent under age 25. On the other hand, 43 percent were age 45 and over 12 percent were over age 65. Only 40 percent of the Polish Americans reported English as their mother tongue, although 93 percent claim it as their current language (Table 3 of the report).

Of course, these figures combine the foreign born with the native Polish origin people. When these generations are separated for an analysis of people reporting Polish as their mother tongue, the foreign born had a median age of 65+ years while the native born had a median age of 47. These figures are based on only 339,000 foreign born and 1,982,000 native born Polish origin people who spoke Polish in their home during childhood (Table 6 of the report). One reason why more Polish origin people do not currently speak Polish is that

only 41 percent of the men married Polish origin wives (Table 4 of the report).

Another set of figures regarding the generational composition of the Polish Americans in 1969 finds that families of 73 percent of the fathers who had been born in Poland and immigrated to America contained sons born in the United States and only 23 percent also had sons who were born in Poland. The figures are similar for the place of birth of the mother and the child. All the statistics indicate a high probability that the Polish American communities and families have contained members who were socialized in their youth into different social worlds and who have lived their lives in a variety of subcultures, made both more complex and somewhat less heterogeneous by the degree of institutional completeness and the tightness of ethnic community boundaries in America (Barth, 1969; Breton, 1964).

Intergenerational Relations: Sources of Strain

Sociologists since Kingsley Davis (1940) have theorized about, and researched, the strains contributed to intergenerational relations by the fact that each generation is born and socialized into different social worlds. The more rapidly the culture and society are changing, the greater the gap between the social worlds of grandparents, parents and the youngest generation (see also LeMasters, 1970). American society is noted for the rapidity of its cultural and social change, especially since the turn into the twentieth century. Persons born, or migrating into, the United States before World War II, or even before "the great depression" lived in completely different surroundings and world view than their children born after World War II or grandchildren currently in school. Furthermore, people of prior generations

never "catch up" with the culture of new generations, in spite of television and other aspects of life they allegedly share across time because of the deacceleration of the rate of socialization with age. People now going through the early socialization and education process are learning the 1980s culture at a rate unmatched by the learning of older generations. The content of the social world of older generations, the objects and symbols with which they make life meaningful, the definitions of the situations with which they come in contact or about which they hear from others is a different world than that of their children or grandchildren. It is very difficult if not impossible for them to replace meanings and sentiments acquired in their youth just because they became outmoded through cultural change.

These sources of intergeneration strain and conflict analyzed by Davis (1940) and LeMasters (1970) apply to families born into the same society and culture, which regardless of the rate of change, provide some continuity through time. The differences between generations become compounded if each is born and socialized into different worlds, as true of immigrants and their descendents. In the case of Poles coming to America, the contrast was enormous, not only because the societies and national cultures were so different, but also because of the differences in life style of the immigrants prior to emigration and their children born here (Lopata, 1976b, 1977). Many immigrants came mainly from villages, familiar only with their own limited "okolica" and agriculture as a way of life (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918-1920). This is particularly true of the vast majority of immigrants of the pre-World War II years. Those Poles who came from cities or more urbanized and industrialized areas of Poland, who had obtained many years of schooling providing a foundation of knowledge of other ways of life and social systems, as did many of

the "new emigration" Poles, found the contrast between their lives and those of their American born children less dramatic (Lopata, 1976b; Mostwin, 1969, 1971). The less educated immigrants simply could not learn the new culture or understand the way of life of the American society as rapidly as did their children and future generations. An important point made by symbolic interactionists is that such learning is not simply a matter of rational effort but is complicated by feelings and sentiments, values and deeply held beliefs about the world. Such situational definitions and world views are not shed easily because they form the core of the self-concept. Immigrants thus come with ideas and feelings about family relations, gender appropriate behavior, the roles of husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter, family rituals, relgious beliefs, health, leisure, beauty, work, and so forth into which they were socialized in youth and which they do not want to give up or ever have questioned. The same world is not available or esteemed in American society into which the children go, no matter how much the parents want to protect them from acculturation. Immigrants are unable to recreate their old country communities and to surround themselves with all the supports which would prevent cultural change in their own families, let alone for future generations.

In addition, the society within which the immigrants settled encourages social change and upward mobility, providing education, job training, and mass communication as means of learning the steps needed to move out of a lower social strata, in spite of discrimination barriers. The ideology of such an open and flexible mobility is known and usually believed by members of this society, placing parents in a double bind situation of great intensity. The upward mobility of offspring is generally possible only if each generation

discards the culture of the ancestors and becomes socialized and educated in the dominant culture. This means that parents must allow, even encourage, their children to become unlike them, to believe and behave in different ways, often unpleasant to the older generation. Such permissiveness was very difficult for traditionally socialized Poles in America. It appears from most studies of the Polish Americans that families of only the most recent generation of young people have been encouraged to use the main source of upward and outward mobility of American society: higher education (Lopata, 1976b). Of course, such behavior did not occur to the early immigrants of peasant origin, since they considered themselves only temporary residents of America, here to collect as many material goods as possible in order to better their situation back home when Poland finally regained its independence.

Another source of potential conflict between generations in Polonia rests in the differences of attitudes toward social change between people brought up in more stable societies such as Poland and those reared in the future oriented society of America. Future orientation shifts attention away from the older generation, which among Poles had been socialized to expect it when they reached such age, to the younger generations, seen as providers of a better future for the society. Such an orientation encourages change in life styles, as in fashion and fads, antagonizing generations wishing for stability. The immigrants and the second generation worked very hard to accumulate basic status symbols of property and an "honest" life style and they often define as cavalier the attitudes of younger generations which take affluence for granted, and even criticize the emphasis on material possessions (Wrobel, 1979). Other aspects of American culture, absorbed easily by the younger generations, irritate the older ones, including the informality and egalitarianism in manner and

rights. Mostwin (1969, 1971) reports that this is one of the main sources of conflict between the new emigration following World War II, relatively well educated, settled outside of Polonian neighborhoods and adjusted relative well to their displacement, and their more Americanized children. Bloch (1976), Lopata(forthcoming), Radziatowski (1977) and Wojniusz (1977) point out that the traditional patriarchal structure of the Polish family neglected the influence of women and that the situation of families in America enhanced their power in the family. Lieberman (1979), see also Cohler and Lieberman, 1978 on the other hand, found Polish men who scored highest on authoritarianism as the most apt to report self-satisfaction. Thus the evidence on the patriarchal nature of the Polish American family and intergenerational conflict is mixed.

Finally, intergenerational conflict can occur as the old Polonian neighborhoods break up, with the in-migration of groups with different backgrounds and life styles and the out-migration of the more economically successful younger generations of Polish Americans. The people who remain are the old and the poor, sometimes joined by the also transitory Poles or the few very recent immigrants. As I reported in "Widowhood in Polonia," there is many a widow and older couple in the old Polish neighborhoods in America who are angry because they feel deserted by the younger generations (Lopata, 1977). They want to remain independent, feeling that they have worked too hard in their lives to now move into the homes of their children and be asked to help with the work and childrearing, yet they feel left out. Those who move to the suburbs, following their children, are often uncomfortable over an unfamiliar life style and with their offspring's and grandchildren's friends. Conflict errupts in such intergenerational households over the distribution of objects, work patterns and life styles and the gap between grandparents

and grandchildren can create enormous family problems. Widows also report difficulties with their own children and in-laws over socialization of the grandchildren. This is especially true if the in-laws are of a different ethnic or religious background.[1]

Intergenerational Relations: Sources of Cohesion

The various waves and social classes of immigrants were more or less consciously aware of the need to prevent their children from rejecting Polish or Polonian culture and becoming acculturated into the American way of life to an extent making communication and cooperation difficult if not impossible. In an attempt to prevent this, and also in consequence of their own need to create a life which was at least bearable in this foreign country, the Polish Americans within the local communities and across these into a nation wide and international Polonia built a relatively complete institutional system with definite boundaries. Finding the Catholic church culturally influenced and politically controlled by a hierarchy foreign to them, they insisted on building their own churches and parish buildings including schools. They imported and then trained their own priests, brotherhoods and sisterhoods so as to insure that they experience, and the children learn, the Polish form of Catholicism, rejecting its Irish version (Greeley, 1977; Greeley and Rossi, 1968; Kuznicki, 1978; Kuzniewski, 1978; Miaso, 1971; Polzin, 1973; Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918-1920; Wrobel, 1979). Unable to accomplish this to a level they found acceptable, many Polish Americans created their independent Catholic church which was even transported to Poland (Zawistowski, 1978).

The building of parish schools to which most Polish Americans sent their

children did not result, however, in a generation of Polonians familiar with either Polish culture or much of the Catholic religion, at least according to Greeley and Rossi (1968) and Kusielewicz (1973). Kusielewicz blames the religious orders for the absence of knowledge about Poland and Polish culture on the part of the native-born Polish Americans, but the fact that the parental and earlier immigrant generations were restricted in their familiarity to the village or "okolica" must also be taken into account. The building of these schools is not so much a reflection of the interest of the majority of parents in the intellectual content of the curriculum as in the social control of children in an environment familiar in general to the parents.

Abel (1929), Lopata (1976b: 53), Polzin (1973), Obidinski (1968), Szczepanski (1962), Thomas and Znaniecki (1918-1920) and other observers of the Polish peasants and their Polish American descendants have commented on their hostility to education beyond the mere minimum for the youth, even for boys, although they were expected to be main family breadwinners of the next generation. Abel (1929) reported that education was considered dangerous because it gave youth strange ideas and decreased its interest in hard work. A further reason families discouraged advanced education, in addition to the fear that it would Americanize children or at least create social distance between generations, is the desire to have each member contribute to the family status through earnings as soon as possible. Internal status competition has been a very important feature of Polonia. Although individuals could maintain and modify their status vis-a-vis others in the community through their own behavior, it is mainly the family which served as the unit of cooperation in its own "okolica" or area within which its reputation is contained (Lopata,

1976b, Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918-1920). Only internally important sources of status were acknowledged and this did not include non-parochial and higher education outside the community. Income, converted to homes and other material objects within the community were important sources of status (Lopata, 1976b; Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918-1920; Wood, 1955; Wrobel, 1979). The status competition provided the glue keeping families and the community together, although it also produced much externally visible conflict. It contributed to keeping new generations within the community of primary or secondary settlement and active in its voluntary associations rather than outwardly oriented.

The voluntary associations were of themselves important to the life of the Polish American community, creating ties among people and neighborhoods collaterally and intergenerationally and providing a superstructure and culture which helped the immigrants and some members of the second and third generation to live a life of relative self-sufficiency apart from the dominant society (Breton, 1964; Gordon, 1964; Lieberson, 1963; Zachariasiewicz, 1978). The complexity of Polonia's structure was developed with the help of not only the immigrants who settled here but also those Poles who stayed here temporarily, later returning to Poland.

Over a million Poles are listed in the United States immigration and naturalization records as having left America during the years prior and just after World War I (Lopata, 1976a). Many of these people were political emigres or members of several different social classes in Poland or in temporary residence elsewhere. These people started innumerable publications, and used every means available in Polonia to convert the regionally or village bound immigrant into a person identifying with the Polish national culture society and the effort to have it reunited into one political state (Lopata, 1976b;

Pacyniak, 1978; Sywak, 1978; Znaniecki, 1952). Identifying Polonia as the "fourth province of Poland" such nationalists obtained enormous sums of money from the Polish Americans for governments in exile, the wars, help to Poles under occupation and assistance in the rebuilding of the country after the wars. Such dramatic and heroic activity helped to unify generations within Polonia; many a second generation man joining the Polish forces under General Haller and identifying with the Polish cause (Haiman, 1948; Lopata, 1976b; Polzin, 1973; Wachtl, 1944).

Even in the inter-war years, the Polish American organizations have survived the gradual Americanization of each succeeding generation and the transmission of office and activity intergenerationally (Lopata, 1976b; Sanders and Morawska, 1975; Zachariasiewicz, 1978). They and the economic growth of the community provided many opportunities for cultural transmission and contact among people of all ages and generations in America. Although the "new emigration" and the descendents of the old emigration tended to avoid each other at the early years of the "displaced persons" movement to America, social class similarities brought them together in many efforts (Gordon, 1964). For example, the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, originally almost wholly composed of first generation immigrants and refugees, has increasingly included second and even third generation Polish Americans so that the language at meetings is now officially English.

The initial tendency of sons to go into the same occupation as followed by fathers, observed by Carpenter and Katz in 1927, Hutchinson in 1956 and Duncan and Duncan in 1968 is beginning to decrease due to the use of higher education by the youngest generation, but the tendency itself preserved inter-generational relations for more than two sets of parent-child. So did the

conservative outlook of these generations so that, whatever conflict existed, it tended not to push the children to extremes of liberal thought. There has thus been a transmission of many attitudes toward family roles from generation to generation, even if now the language of socialization tends to be mainly English and Polish observers of the American scene find people identified as Polish Americans to be very little Polish in culture (McCready, 1974; Nowakowski, 1964). Wrobel (1979) found the Polish Americans in a working class neighborhood of Detroit very similar to the people described in less objective terms by Wood in 1955 in Hamtramck, and McCready found distinct differences between Polish Americans and descendents of other ethnic origins in the combined sample he and Greeley used in Ethnicity in the United States (Greeley, 1974).

Summary and Conclusions

Most of the immigrants who came from Poland to the United States prior to the cut-off of the wave through quotas and the economic and political situation of both countries prior to World War II are no longer living, their fourth generation descendents often invisible to social scientists. First and second generations were observed and frequently commented on by sociologists reflecting the American concern with the size of the immigration and the cultural differences between the entrants and the already established descendents of colonists from other nations. Thomas and Znaniecki (1918-1920), Thomas, Park and Miller (1921/1971), Taft (1936), Thrasher (1927), Wood (1955) and others were particularly noticing of the amount of open intergenerational and organizational conflict in Polonia. Thomas and Znaniecki (1918-1920)

documented the type of conflict which reached American courts to which parents brought their children in order to force obedience, economic help or the cessation of some form of behavior. Wood (1955) portrayed Hamtramck as full of conflict and competition among all generations and levels of relations. The preponderance of Polish gangs in Chicago was studied by Thrasher (1927) and the frequency of comment on delinquent behavior in this ethnic group was answered by Taft (1936) in generation and age-sex terms; the Polish population simply contained the highest number of high risk age men of any other group in the 1930s.

Whatever the conflict level, encouraged by the intensity of the status competition which demanded cooperation of all family members, the second generation about whom so many social scientists worried grew up to be rather law abiding adults (Finestone, 1964, 1967). Of course, name changes and geographical mobility lost many second and third generation Polish Americans from observation[redacted]. In fact, some of the widows studied in Chicago's old Polonia did not even know where a child was, having lost contact years ago (Lopata, 1977). Many are relatively socially isolated from kin. Wrobel (1979) points out that intergenerational contact at the present time among working class Detroit Polish Americans is highly dependent upon the stage of the family life course. The peak of interaction occurs when there are small grandchildren in the family, lines of support and pleasurable intercourse strengthening at that time.

Although intergenerational conflict was muted somewat by the creation and involvement in the complex, institutionally somewhat complete and bounded ethnic community and decreased with the decrease of cultural differences between the second generation and its own children and grandchildren all of

whom shared minimal Polish culture influence, the dispersal of the community is obvious to all observers. Geographical movement out of the old neighborhoods of the city has been taking place all along, first into smaller areas of secondary settlement, then on an individualistic family basis. Even families living in the still heavily Polish American neighborhood into which Wrobel (1979) moved to do his ethnographic study, have members scattered in other areas. Interaction decreases as it becomes more difficult to arrange and as people living in different locations and socioeconomic levels develop varied interests. Sandberg's (1974) study of the dispersed Polish Americans in Los Angeles area indicates some of the difficulties in having two or three generations share a modified Polish culture. As the bonds created by Polishness decrease in each generation, other ties must remain to continue interaction. Social security and increased affluence removes economic dependency as a major tie, and some studies indicate that the strictness of manner in family relations is being replaced by more informal affection (Cohler and Lieberman, 19 ; Lieberman, 1979; McCready, 1974). At the same time, some of the studies of the ethnic elderly in American cities indicate frequent social isolation or asymmetrical dependence upon one rather than the total set of offspring (Bild and Havinghurst, 1976; Lopata, 1971, 1972,1973,1977, 1979). Since fertility has been declining among the Polish Americans, the current older generations have fewer children to use as resources than did past generations so that social isolation and the asymmetry of relations may be even more visible in the future. This trend toward the dispersal of families, leaving older members in old neighborhoods and social isolation will probably continue for the current elderly. It will be offset in the future as higher education and increased knowledge of societal resources

equip the newer generations with more personal resources than had been available to the first and second generations of Poles in America, who were heavily dependent upon family and community. However, we need studies of intergenerational relations, tracing families historically and occupationally.

Footnotes

1. In Poland of recent years, on the other hand, a high proportion of rural and even urban older people live with their married children (Piotrowski, 1970). Lobodzinska (1970, 1974) found many of the older generation mothers voluntarily baby sitting and doing housechores for their children and grandchildren who tend to live nearby, in order to free the middle generation of both sexes to take on full-time employment. The housing shortage in Poland and the tendency to own apartments leads to doubling up in early years of a couple's marriage with either set of parents and to a lack of mobility over the life course. This is a very different pattern than followed by Polish American families, though Obidinski (1968) found some third generation couples of young families willing to live with the grandparents because of the size of their homes and inexpensiveness of neighborhoods.

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